

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHJM #1348/01 0940754
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 040754Z APR 06
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1336
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001348

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2016
TAGS: [KPAL](#) [PGOV](#) [IS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: EREKAT ON THE WAY FORWARD

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a March 31 discussion, Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member and PLO Negotiations Affairs Chief Sa'eb Erekat told NEA A/S Welch, DAPNSA Abrams, LTG Dayton and Consul General that President Abbas (Abu Mazen) must focus on three areas in the coming months: revitalizing Fatah, building the PA President's office, and finding a way to restart permanent status negotiations with the Government of Israel. Erekat argued that a national referendum on a framework agreement with the Government of Israel is a means of moving forward with the Roadmap and undermining Hamas. Erekat said he viewed the results of the Israeli elections as a positive development because they showed that Israelis do not support either continuing the "occupation" or proceeding further with unilateral withdrawal from the Palestinian territories. Erekat pushed for USG assistance to strengthen the Presidential Guard and argued the USG should consider continuing support for infrastructure projects on a case-by-case basis. END SUMMARY

Top Priorities for Abu Mazen

12. (C) Erekat opened the meeting by saying that Abu Mazen must make progress on three "parallel tracks" in the coming months. First, Abu Mazen must take strong steps to revitalize Fatah in preparation for "what is coming after HAMAS." Second, Abu Mazen must build capacity in the President's office, not only by building up the Presidential Guard but also by building capable economic, political, and communications departments in the President's office. Erekat offered the technocrat-heavy PLO Negotiation Support Unit (NSU) as an example of how these departments would function and asked for USG assistance. Third, Abu Mazen must find a way to "move towards an endgame" with the GOI, i.e. restart discussions of permanent status issues.

13. (C) A/S Welch responded that forcing the HAMAS government to accept the Quartet criteria or fail by refusing should be the fourth priority for Abu Mazen. Erekat acknowledged this point and described his three priorities as supporting that goal. (NOTE: Erekat later added this to his list of priorities during a recap at the close of the meeting. END NOTE) A/S Welch and DAPNSA Abrams added that Fatah reform is the issue for which Abu Mazen has the most control and the USG would be watching closely to see if Abu Mazen chooses to exert strong leadership in this area. Erekat responded that no one is more enthusiastic than Abu Mazen about "getting rid" of troublesome Fatah Central Committee (FCC) members. In regard to USG support for building capacity in the PA President's office, A/S Welch said the USG would need further details on the proposal before it could offer any

response.

Erekat Offers National Referendum Idea

14. (C) DAPNSA Abrams voiced skepticism about conditions for moving forward with permanent status issues, pointing out that the USG and international community could not ignore HAMAS' victory in the PLC elections. Erekat countered that Abu Mazen had been elected on a peace platform and offered the idea of a national referendum on "permanent status parameters" as a means of highlighting the discrepancy between HAMAS' program of armed resistance and the desire of the Palestinian people for a negotiated settlement and a two state solution. Erekat opined that a successful referendum would create a crisis for the HAMAS government.

Israeli Elections Are Opportunity for PA-GOI Negotiations

15. (C) Erekat gave an optimistic take on the March 28 Israeli elections saying the failure of Kadima to gain a strong mandate and Likud's poor performance showed that there is "no Israeli majority for proceeding with unilateralism or continuing the occupation." Erekat described the mixed results as a positive development because further Israeli disengagement from the West Bank in the absence of negotiations would be a "reward for HAMAS." Erekat said he is in touch with his "friends in Labor" and predicted that they would join the government after extracting concessions from Kadima on key portfolios and social issues. Erekat predicted the new Israeli government would eventually proceed with further West Bank disengagement but added that this must be done in the context of negotiations.

USG Support for Presidential Guard

16. (C) Erekat pushed for USG assistance to strengthen the Presidential Guard. Erekat emphasized that "when the confrontation with HAMAS happens" Abu Mazen will need a force of about 10,000 men that is well-trained, properly equipped and capable of protecting him. Erekat noted that according to the PA Basic Law if "anything happened to Abu Mazen" HAMAS PLC speaker Aziz Dweik would assume the presidency. LTG Dayton responded that the USG would need further details on the training and equipment needs of the Presidential Guard, noting that providing assistance to the PA security forces would be difficult for the USG at this point. DAPNSA Abrams added that Abu Mazen should work on convincing the GOI that strengthening the Presidential Guard is a good idea.

Support Infrastructure in Jericho

17. (C) Erekat took advantage of the high-level USG visit to argue for continued USG support for infrastructure projects in his PLC constituency, Jericho. Erekat criticized the wholesale curtailment of USG assistance for infrastructure projects and argued the USG should consider continuing them on a case-by-case basis saying, "it makes no sense to treat the mayor of Jericho the same as the HAMAS mayor in Qalqilya." A/S Welch responded that the USG had decided not to focus on infrastructure projects now in order to maximize pressure on the HAMAS government.

18. (U) NEA A/S Welch cleared this message.

WALLES